

Whittier Business Assn.

DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday, November 9, 2011 4:00-5:30pm

HCMC Whittier Clinic – 2810 Nicollet Ave

Present: Erica Christ (Black Forest Inn), Gil Bassard (Tasks Unlimited), Joanne Christ (Black Forest Inn), John Darlington (Simpson Church), Paul Jablonsky (Nicollet Ave Carwash), Rachel Lewis (Washburn Center for Children), Councilman Robert Lilligren (City of Minneapolis), Ken Piper (Tanek), David. Schuster (The Lost and Found Inc.), Laraine Steel (Whittier Clinic), Elizabeth Trumble (Old Arizona), Hassan Warsame (Franklin BP). Sharath Reniguntala (HCMC), Julio Perfetti Diaz (HCMC)

Staff: Marian Biehn (Whittier Alliance), Lisa Hermanson (Whittier Alliance),

Call to order at 4:07 by Erica Christ, WA BA Chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A **motion** to approve the agenda with the addition of current events in Old and New Business was made, and **carried**. The October BA minutes were presented and a **motion** to approve **carried**.

Spotlight on Business – HCMC Julio Perfetti Diaz: HCMC is celebrating 1 year in Whittier. History- the Family Medical Center opened in 1986 on Lake and Blaisdell. At the time it moved to Whittier, the center was seeing 20,000 patients per year. After its move to Whittier and subsequent renaming of Whittier Clinic, that number increased to 50,000 patients. Services provided include family practice, MRIs, pediatrics, women's health, nutrition, cardiology, physical therapy, integrative health, minor surgical services, pharmacy, social services, financial services for uninsured and interpreter services. Clinic hours were given. Same day and next day appointments for Whittier clinic patients are available. Whittier Clinic is home to a residency program and recruits 10-12 residents per year from around the world, and they stay for 3 years. The space Whittier Clinic occupies now was originally a meat packing plant space. The clinic has made a strong effort to fit in aesthetically with the community including displaying art from community members. It was commented that Whittier clinic did a great job of incorporating natural light and art, particularly in conference room and suggested that the clinic look into a vinyl scrim on street-facing windows to allow a view in. The clinic offers employment to Whittier residents and draws people in from other areas who in turn patronize local businesses. The clinic also received the 2011 Silver Award from the US Green Building Council and has adopted a section of greenway. The name Whittier Clinic (vs. Family Medical Center) came from an effort from HCMC to change all of its clinic names to reflect their location. You can find out whether your insurance is accepted at the clinic by calling with your policy number. To make an appt call the main number 612-545-9000; you will be transferred to a contact center that will walk you through registry and get a medical record number. The new building is prototype and will spread to other HCMC clinics. Since moving to the Whittier location, the Clinic's demographics have broadened. The clinic will see any patient regardless of ability to pay. Unique to the Whittier clinic is that there are financial counselors on site to work with various needs. The clinic also has payment plans. The funds for this come from several governmental agencies as well as emergency medical, then Hennepin Care discounts and self-pay. A large percentage of people pay for their services in some way. Recently Whittier Clinic has become a health care homes provider, where health care providers take a more holistic approach to health care for some patients whose needs are not being met by doctor visits alone. There are also patient advisory committees that are composed of 50% Spanish speakers and 50% English speakers. The clinic tries to accommodate patients with primary care doctor or the dr.'s partner.

Reopening of Nicollet Ave- CM Robert Lilligren: Reopening Nicollet has been stated as Councilman Lilligren's top priority while in office. The idea is to right an old wrong done to the n'hood. History-in the early 1970s city created the first Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, one of which was Nicollet Ave. The point of TIF was to estimate the future value of piece of property once developed and uses that to finance redevelopment of the site through issuance of bonds. It was then thought that this area would become one of the most successful tax increments, but due to other influences such as a deep recession in the mid 1970s and a collapse in the condominium market, this area did not fare as well as expected. The city moved ahead with the land acquisition without a developer and they sat with it. It became drain on taxpayers. Kmart came forward, was willing to use the property, but wanted the store in the right of way closing Nicollet. This angered the Whittier n'hood as it severed a main commercial artery into the city, blocked the grid pattern. The vote between city council members was very divisive and eventually favored Kmart. In 1975, protestors gathered against this to no avail. The result was a blighting impact along to the Nicollet Ave north. Because the city was complicit in disconnecting the community, it is now felt that the city needs to play a role in correcting the mistake. To complicate these events was the construction of the interstate system, which also affected the Phillips and Whittier n'hoods negatively. People in decision making positions lost ability to see value of Lake and Nicollet and the belief that this part of the city has strategic value. To keep this from happening again, the businesses must illustrate the value of Lake and Nicollet and the fact that it may easily be one of the most accessible places in the metro. Reopening Nicollet is in the city comprehensive plan (the official planning document of the city) as well as the Metropolitan Council plan and Whittier's strategic plan. Mayor Rybak uses reopening of Nicollet as a vision in many public comments, an agreed to Councilman Lilligren's proposal to create a project team through the 2012 budget process and define it around reopening of Nicollet. This would include setting criteria, engaging community, establishing benchmarks and reporting. The project team would give legitimacy and structure to the initiative and include executives from the Planning and Economic Development Depts and possibly community representatives as well as Hennepin County staff, Met Council, and Metro

Transit. The BA needs to define the needs of the n'hood.

The complexities of reopening Nicollet including ownership. The site is split into two pieces and owned by Kmart and the grocery store. Kmart in turn has a property owner, ground lease owner and building lease owner, and the underlying property owner is trust, so it has a legal obligation to maximize the value of the trust. Nicollet is municipal state aide road, and the county owns Lake and the Midtown Greenway corridor, but the city owns the bridge that goes over it. In discussions w Kmart nothing has radically changed, but with an aging building that will need to be replaced, they are interested in how they can reconfigure the store. Kmart's willingness to comply will make a very large difference in costs, but the major problem is how the city can control what needs control. Whether or not they are willing can make a huge difference in public cost of the project. Reconfiguration is not usually an option, but in a weak market it may not be prohibitive. The n'hood does not want to squeeze out Kmart or Sullivan's. What has complicated the project to date is more the disagreement on priorities between city parties and jurisdictions, like an emphasis on alternative transportation. Councilman Lilligren has made attempts and is frustrated and confused with the lack of progress due to conflicting priorities in city hall and the significant transition of power currently in the city and county.

The city is moving forward on reintroducing streetcars. Considerable resources and 2 years of planning have identified a primary network of 7 lines. The city has applied for federal funds and prioritized down to one line which would extend through Nicollet and Central Aves, which would replace busses on those streets. City has been awarded nearly \$900,000 in federal funds, matched with city funds that were set aside. The streetcar line will be one of the things that put pressure on the city to reopen Nicollet. The Greenway Transit Line also received fed funds for planning a transit rail. This rail would go from the SW Light Rail, west of Uptown to Hiawatha; the longer term vision would go all the way to city limits and someday into St. Paul. The Greenway becomes an attractive option to move people more quickly. If this does not happen, SW Hiawatha will lose a lot of transit and transit accessible jobs. They are now starting to engage the community in planning. Employers along the potential corridor strongly support this idea, and federal funding gives legitimacy to plans. Fundamental criteria are redevelopment opportunities, and this is a big one, which will help the project score well on federal applications. With this plan some large signature employer—like Surly—could come into the n'hood and really give it some definition. Right now, the key component with the federal government is jobs. Density at Lake and Nicollet is not as likely as at Lake and Calhoun because of the Lake. Development does not come easily or happen automatically, and there needs to be something (like a lake) to attract people. The census numbers do not support this as density which only makes sense if you're losing housing. The city hasn't grown in 50 years; the n'hood itself has lost about 3,000 people in last few years. The Planning Dept thinks this project should wait for the right developer, but with the city's jaded track record of large developments, the n'hood may be better off putting together a small task force that can then move forward with plans to attract developers. Councilman Lilligren's current focus is to have multiple ownership vs. one big owner/developer. The developer aspect is huge relative to other components, and development is highly opportunistic and unreliable. There has to be some way to engage the developer to make this happen. One angle mentioned would be to find a model city where this initiative has worked to spur buy-in so that this project can become a success story. It is too soon to tell what this project would cost, but rough estimates are around \$20-25 million.

The inclusion of the Lake and Nicollet intersection in the greater 35 W/Lake St. interchange was a decision made by the county 12-13 years ago and includes the assumption that Nicollet would be reopened. Around the Lake St and 35W project, there has been a lot of discussion going on trying to come to agreement on big pieces of the 35W access project. One unique component is that this project—involving an interstate—should be headed by MNDOT, but because they and the city did not want it and Metro Transit only wanted their bus stops brought to compliance at the freeway level, the project planning was passed off to the county. This resulted in Hennepin County being given authority over \$18 million of federal funds, and because there is a huge concern about uncommitted earmarks such as this, the county is trying to quickly encumber those funds. This means that technically Nicollet and Lake could become part of the project, but so far that idea is has not been popular. They are still working on how to maintain Lake St as an accessible community street that is also useful for pedestrians.

Old & New business

35W Transit Access: The next meeting will be at the end of November, and renderings will be shown at that time.

Current events: Greenfair Saturday, Nov. 12th 1-4 pm, First Christian Church Fellowship Hall 2201 1st Ave: WA is again sponsoring the annual Greenfair. There will be something for property and homeowners as well as business owner's renters. There will be 30 presenters on all subjects, and everything is walkable. **Vertical Endeavors Grand Opening Saturday, Nov. 12th 11am-5pm:** The building has been repurposed into a climbing wall. There will be free climbing, raffles, giveaways, etc. This will be a great destination in the n'hood, which supports part of WA's strategic plan. There will be more openings in that building to come. **Book Sale at former Black Forest Deli:** There are 10,000 books \$1 each encompassing pulp fiction, science fiction, mystery, etc. **Pet doctors** is having grand opening to meet vets and will be providing some discounted services. **Whittier Fall Cleanup** was last Sat. Thank you to all the participants. There were 60 volunteers who filled 40 bags of garbage. **Wine Tasting:** Old Arizona has wine tasting on 17th please preregister. **MCAD Art Sale** will be Nov. 17th-19th. WATCH YOUR CALENDAR FOR OTHER WHITTIER HAPPENINGS!

Adjourn: 5:42

Next Meeting: Wed., Dec 14, 2011 Murals of LynLake 2833 Lyndale Ave. 4:00-5:30

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by: Lisa Hermanson